

Reading extract and questions: Son of the Sea

For two long, silent hours, Duncan slouched beside his Dad as their battered old car bumped and bounced along the dark track. All the time, the wind howled like a hungry phantom as it hurled an endless supply of frozen rain at their windscreen.

Not exactly how Duncan had planned on spending his tenth birthday.

He had wanted to hang out with Callum, Rajesh and Skye, but no – Dad had said he had *'something special planned'*. This was weird, even for Dad. Not that Duncan didn't love his father dearly, of course he did.

Since his mum had left them when he was just a baby, the pair of them had stuck together. He still wished he was with his friends though.

"Maybe next year," he muttered to himself as the car finally stopped.

"Stop your mumblin' and get yourself out of the car son," grunted Dad.

"Where are we?" asked the boy.

"I'll tell ya when we're out of the wind," said Dad. "Now don't forget your hat."

Stepping out of the car was like disappearing into a pitch-black tornado. Like an iron fist, his father's hand appeared from the gloom and guided him around the car. They kept pushing forwards against an invisible pressure like a night dragon's breath but eventually Dad had guided Duncan to safety. They crouched out of the wicked wind's reach.

"You're ten now son," Dad called into his ear. "In your culture, that means you're an adult. So she wants to congratulate ya!"

"An adult?" spluttered Duncan. "My culture? Who's she?"

"Hush now!" his father yelled excitedly, pointing. "Look – there she is!"

The full moon had painted everything in its silvery light so Duncan could see the beach quite clearly. There, on a rock just out to sea, sat a seal. A magnificent, glimmering seal but still just a seal.

"It's a seal," said Duncan, flatly.

"Go on, go on!" cried Dad. "Take your boots and socks off and paddle out to her!"

Duncan's mouth opened and closed silently a few times before he managed to respond. "What?"

It was true that Duncan did love swimming. It was also true that he loved spending time in the sea so much that his Dad called him 'The son of the sea.' But paddling in a stormy sea in the middle of a February night? No way!

"Ya trust me, don't ya son?" asked Dad, placing his big hands on his son's shoulders. Duncan gulped then nodded. "Then go to her!"

Duncan found himself doing as he was told. He was soon waddling like a penguin onto the freezing sand.

The seal just stared at him. What was he doing? Somehow, he kept going.

Then, as soon as his numb toes touched the icy waters, the seal glowed silver, then white. It was a blinding, blazing white that was too bright to look at. Duncan stumbled backwards and collapsed onto the sand.

When he looked up, all he could see was an empty seal skin lying on the rock in the water. Then he noticed the silent silver figure beside him. She laid a misty hand on his shoulder and smiled.

"Happy birthday, my son," she whispered.



Vocabulary

1. Write down three words to describe what kind of evening it was.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

2. ...*eventually Dad had guided Duncan to safety.* Explain what *guided* means in this sentence.

3. *She laid a misty hand on his shoulder and smiled.* What does the word *misty* tell you about the figure?
Tick **two**.

She is solid.

She is pale.

She is see-through.

She smells damp.

Retrieval

4. What did the wind howl like at the beginning of the story?

5. What did Dad say he had planned for Duncan's birthday?

6. What did Duncan walk like when he was barefoot on the cold sand?

Inference

7. Look at the first paragraph. What kind of journey did Duncan have to the beach? Tick **one**.

short

boring

exciting

fun

8. Look at the section that begins: *'Then, as soon as his numb toes touched the icy waters...'*
Why was there only an empty seal skin lying on the rock now?

9. Think about how Dad acts through the story then look at the statement below. Tick whether you think it is **true** or **false**.

	True	False
Dad looks after Duncan well.		

Explain why you think this.

Meaning as a whole

10. Retell the story in your own words.

Authorial intent

11. Give two reasons why the story is called *Son of the Sea*.

1. _____

2. _____

Compare

12. How does Duncan's mood change throughout the story?
